



U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance in the South Asia Region

USAID coordinates international disaster assistance provided by the U.S. Government. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance responds to natural, human-made, and technological disasters. Its mandate is to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and reduce the economic impact of disasters. Strategically, it has two major objectives: 1) to meet critical needs of targeted vulnerable groups in emergency situations, and; 2) to increase adoption of mitigation measures in countries at greatest risk of natural and human-made disasters.

Disaster Declaration Process

Prior to the U.S. Government declaring that a disaster exists, three criteria must be met: the affected country must request or must indicate acceptance of assistance; the magnitude of the disaster must exceed the affected country's capacity to respond, and; it must be in the interest of the U.S. Government to provide assistance. If these criteria are met, the U.S. Ambassador or Chief of Mission in the affected country or the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the affected region may declare that a disaster exists. This allows the U.S. Government to provide assistance.

USAID has numerous response options. These include: 1) authorizing \$50,000 immediately through the U.S. Embassy or USAID Mission to a national government disaster coordinating organization, local or international non-governmental organization (NGO), international organizations, or U.N. organization; 2) deploying an assessment team, a Disaster Assistance Response Team, or a regional advisor to the affected country; 3) funding of grants to humanitarian organizations to meet the critical needs of disaster victims; 4) delivering and distributing disaster relief commodities, and/or; 5) providing technical assistance.

History of Disaster Assistance in Nepal

USAID funding in Nepal is proportionately higher for Nepal than in the rest of South Asia due partly to Kathmandu's seismic vulnerability, and partly to the ongoing conflict facing the country.

Response to Natural Disaster: The first disaster declaration since 1993 was made for Nepal in 2002 in response to the floods and landslides that occurred due to the monsoon. Under the Disaster Declaration, \$50,000 was granted to meet the emergency needs of flood and landslide victims.

Earthquake Preparedness for the Kathmandu Valley: This 2003 – February 2005 program strengthened the earthquake disaster preparedness and response capability of the Nepal Red Cross Society and ten communities in the Kathmandu Valley.

Regional Flood Forecasting: USAID supported technical assessments and forums from 2001-2004 that united decision-makers and technicians from the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan) to collaborate and share information related to flood management, flood early-warning systems, and broader trans-boundary water issues.

Adaptive Strategies for Flood and Drought Mitigation in South Asia: This 2002-2004 program assessed flood and drought coping strategies developed by local communities in India and Nepal, and recommended new and more effective strategies for reducing vulnerabilities.

Response to Conflict in Nepal: in 1993, a declaration was made to address the conflict in Nepal with emergency supplies to displaced persons funding for a conflict assessment. The Disaster Declaration was renewed for 2003-2004, under which funds were granted to address the urgent medical needs of people in food deficit and conflict-affected areas of West and Far Western Nepal (Bajura and Bajhang districts).

What is USAID doing now in the region regarding disaster preparation/mitigation Nepal?

Kathmandu Valley Earthquake Risk Management Plan: This five-year (through August 2005) activity with the Government of Nepal, NGOs, schools, and local communities increases earthquake awareness and preparedness by coordinating and monitoring the long-term earthquake risk reduction plan for the Kathmandu Valley.

Program for the Enhancement of Emergency Response, Phase II (March 2003 – March 2008): This program creates a large pool of trained instructors from emergency response agencies, who in turn train others from their organizations. Areas covered are: 1) collapsed structure search and rescue; 2) medical first responder, and 3) hospital emergency preparedness. Specifically, this program increases the corps of trainers, adapts courses to national requirements, introduces a hospital-preparedness course for mass casualties, and creates a coordinating network of disaster responders in each country. It works in India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines and Bangladesh.

Disaster and Conflict Preparedness Program in Nepal: This November 2003 – March 2006 program builds community resilience to natural disasters and conflict-induced vulnerabilities. It works in 15 conflict-affected and food deficit districts of Nepal and aims to establish an emergency response network of local NGOs and community-based groups to implement preparedness and relief activities; provide small grants to local NGOs; and stockpile locally-procured relief items for use in emergencies.

For more information:

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